How to Lose a Guy in 10 Dates (or Less)

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How to Lose a Guy in 10 Dates (or Less)

by lumosatnight

Summary

Draco has a bet to win. Harry has a point to prove. How hard can it be?

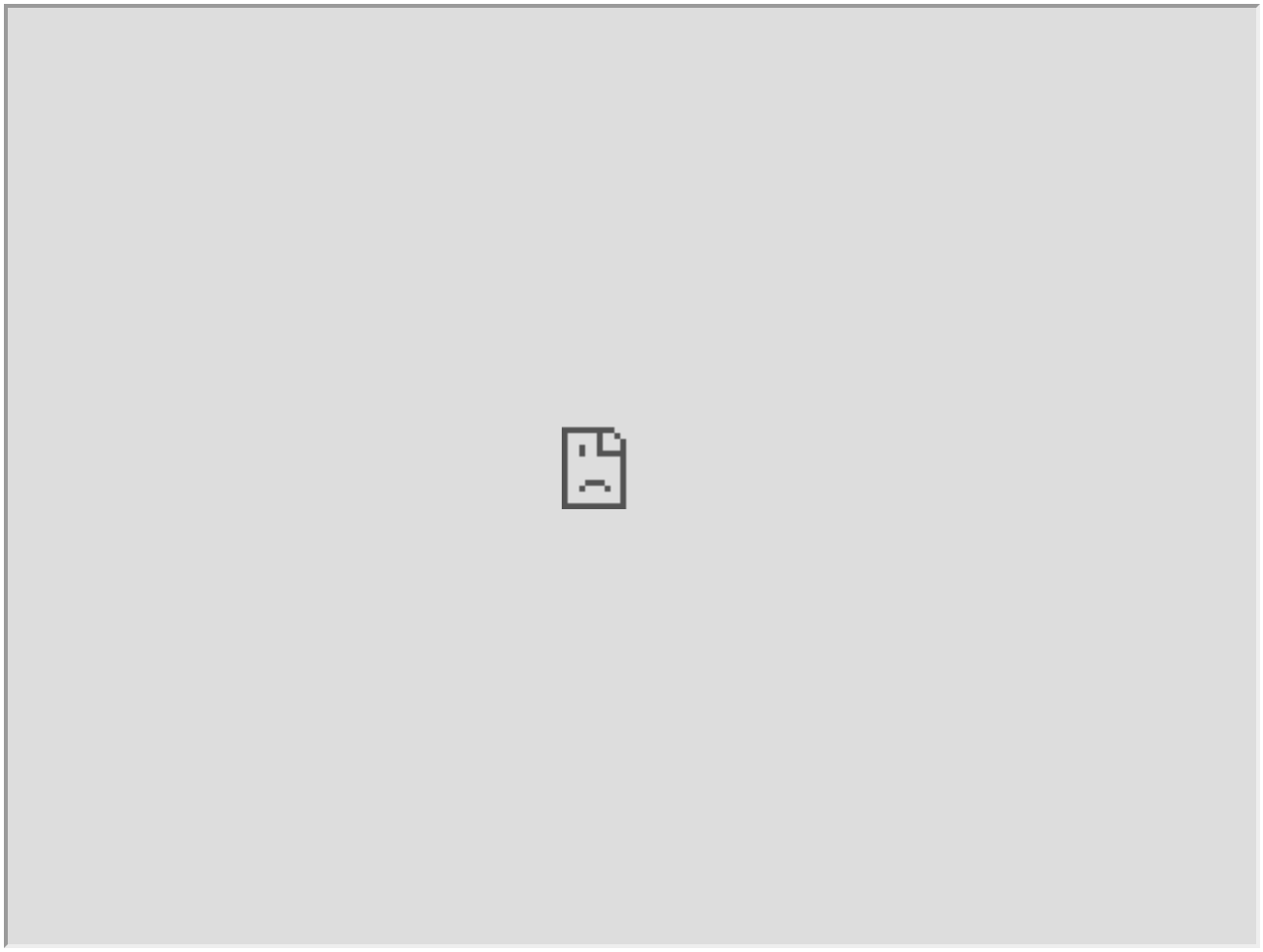
(Includes: snogging over lo mein, Harry's martial arts studio, Draco's overuse of the Floo, drunk card games, and a yellow silk shirt)

Notes

This fic is based on one of my favorite romcoms. I pretty much took Kate Hudson in that iconic yellow dress and thought "WHAT IF DRARRY???". I took a lot of liberties, but it was so much fun throwing Harry and Draco into these hilarious situations. Thank you, mods, for being so kind and accommodating. And thank you, Cecil, for the super speedy beta!

Additional Warnings: This fic contains brief instances of misogynistic language typical of early 2000's romcoms.

See the end of the work for more notes



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Part 1: The Rulebook

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“Men are pigs,” Pansy proclaimed. She swiped a lock of dark hair from her brow and swallowed the rest of her martini without pause.

“Absolute animals,” Theo agreed, staring at her avidly, his gaze drawn to her red-painted lips.

Blaise looked between them with a frown.

Draco rolled his eyes and sipped at his own drink, a perfectly acceptable brandy old fashioned sweet, thanks so much for asking. He tilted his head, letting his neck give a satisfying crack. Pansy flashed him an annoyed look, and he smirked at her in response.

“Maybe if you would stop driving them away,” Draco drawled, “they would stop leaving you.”

“I do not drive them away,” Pansy sniffed.

“Of course, you do.” Draco raised his hand at the bartender, signalling another round. They would certainly need it with the way Pansy was going on tonight.

Pansy turned to him, giving him the full extent of her formidable glare. Draco was an honest man (well, at least more honest than he used to be), and he could admit that Pansy’s glare could cause mortal harm when warranted.

“You’re too clingy,” he explained hastily. “Too intense, too fast. Of course, they leave. You scare them off whether you mean to or not.”

Pansy’s eyes narrowed, her long lashes drooping. Sometimes, Draco wondered how she could even see through the thick layers of glue.

“That’s ridiculous,” scoffed Pansy.

“Yes, ridiculous,” agreed Theo, bobbing his head like an overeager puppy.

“I’ll prove it to you, darling.”

“And how do you intend to do that?” asked Blaise, scowling in Theo’s direction, although Theo didn’t seem to notice.

Draco raised his glass and stood from the bar. “Watch, and I’ll show you.”

Theo finally tore his eyes from Pansy long enough to look at him, something about Draco’s determined tone setting him off. Draco’s schemes were always ill-advised — embarrassing in the best cases, illegal in the worst.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” Theo said, always the rule follower, always the boring one.

Draco scoffed. “Really now. How petty do you think I am?”

“Very,” Blaise muttered into his glass.

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Across the bar, Harry was having another row with Hermione.

Well, it wasn’t a row, really. That would imply that there was an argument, an argument in which both parties participated equally, maybe yelling a bit in each other’s faces, waving their fists around for emphasis.

It was more like a barrage, Harry thought morosely. Here he was, enjoying his perfectly fine pint of ale on this lovely Friday evening, when Hermione had grabbed him by the ear and hadn’t let go.

“Harry James Potter.”

“Ow,” Harry complained.

“Just what are you doing?”

“What do you mean?” Harry tried to pull away, but Hermione held fast. Maybe Ron could come and save him, although Ron was almost always useless when his girlfriend’s wrath was involved. True to form, Ron had his face turned away, much too interested in staring at the dingy overhead lights to be of any help.

“Why have you not contacted Elise? She’s been waiting for your letter.” She finally released his ear, and he rubbed it with a grimace, taking a few steps back and out of reach.

“I dunno.” He shrugged. “It just didn’t work out.”

Hermione crossed her arms, levelling him with her steely glare. “Like how it didn’t work out with Jason and Amanda and Steward and Harper and… let’s see, how many have there been now?” She sighed, letting her arms fall to her sides. “Harry, you can’t keep doing this.”

“Doing what?” Harry asked evasively, slowly starting to scoot around her and hoping she wouldn’t notice.

“Did you even go on a second date?”

“Of course, I did.”

“How about a third?” Hermione raised an impressively bushy eyebrow.

“Well, I —”

“Oh, Harry…” Hermione lamented in that nagging voice that sounded an awful lot like Mrs Weasley. “It’s like you’re allergic to any relationship lasting longer than two dates. I’m starting to worry you’ll never be in a committed relationship.”

“That is untrue,” Harry argued stubbornly even if it was sort of true.

“Oh, really?” goaded Hermione, tsking when Harry took another sip of his beer and left a layer of foam on his upper lip. She licked her thumb and cleaned it off before he could protest.

“I’ll prove it to you.” He scooted around Hermione, finally managing to struggle out of her grasp and bringing his nearly empty pint with him. “Just watch, you’ll see! I’ll be all shacked up in no time.”

Hermione frowned as Harry left their table and got lost in the crowd.

“You think he’ll really do it?” Ron asked. He had finally given up pretending to look at the ceiling and felt it safe to rejoin the conversation. These lights were only so interesting, mostly dusty honestly.

“No idea,” Hermione said. “I need another drink.”

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“Him?” Pansy pointed at a burly bloke at the bar, all muscles and a wiry, unkempt beard.

Draco shook his head. “Terrible hygiene.”

“Him?” Draco swivelled towards the clearly athletic build of a bloke on the dancefloor.

“Too short.”

“How about him?”

Draco crinkled his nose at the lanky bloke nursing a pint in the corner. He was dressed in a sweater vest and corduroys. Who even wore that in this day and age? “Too librarian.”

Pansy huffed. “Now you’re just being picky on purpose.”

“It’s not my fault I have standards,” he replied snarkily, “unlike some people I know.”

“Fuck you,” said Pansy though there was no heat to it. Insults were her love language, something most of her suitors didn’t understand. She peered around the pub, eyes alighting on a lone figure striding through the crowd.

“Him,” she said.

Draco turned, spotting the head of dark curls, the broad shoulders, and the muscled arms attached to veiny wrists. Oh yes, he would do quite nicely. He set his drink next to Pansy. Better to go in empty-handed.

Squaring his shoulders, he approached the man.

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“Hello, handsome, can I get you another drink?”

Harry felt a hand on his shoulder and whirled around to come face to face with —

“Malfoy?”

Malfoy’s expression flickered, surprise, then annoyance, before settling into something that Harry could only describe as mischievous. Since when was Malfoy mischievous?

He hadn’t seen Malfoy much since school. Their paths crossed at the occasional class gathering or shared Ministry function. If Harry recalled, the last time they had interacted, Harry had been hiding from a disastrous date and had ducked behind the first person he could find, who happened to be Malfoy. Malfoy had simply rolled his eyes at him but thankfully had not given Harry’s position away when Harry’s date of the week had come stumbling around the corner tearfully calling his name.

“Come now, Harry. We should be on a first-name basis by now, surely.”

Harry blinked and blinked again. When he continued to blink stupidly without the return of his higher processing functions, ~~Malfoy~~ Draco ploughed right on.

“What are you drinking? Can I get you another?”

“Oh, um…” Harry glanced at his glass. He didn’t actually remember what it was. He usually just ordered whatever beer was on the menu with the highest alcohol content, the quicker to get drunk with for the cheapest price. “I’ll take whatever you’re having.”

Draco’s smile wavered, but in the next moment, it was back in full force, exposing a row of perfectly straight teeth. They were strangely attractive teeth.

“Your wish is my command,” he said with a little bow and left for the bar without further ado.

Well, that was weird, thought Harry. It seemed like it was going to be an interesting evening. At least he would be getting a free drink out of it if nothing else.

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“…and so that’s when I snatched the Snitch straight out from under his nose,” Harry finished his story, waving his arm through the air in excitement, beer sloshing out the side of his pint.

Draco tactfully moved away from the waterfall of fermented yeast. This had the added benefit of bringing him closer to Harry’s side, something he took full advantage of by pressing their thighs together under the table.

“What a thrilling tale,” Draco murmured, forcing Harry to lean closer in order to hear. “I say, it’s starting to feel a bit crowded in here. Shall we go somewhere more private?”

Harry swallowed, and Draco relished in the way his cheeks were the slightest pink. It could have been the alcohol, but he liked to believe it was his marvellous flirting causing the great Harry Potter to blush like a schoolgirl.

“Yeah, uh, yeah sure.” Harry stumbled out of the booth, and Draco caught him around the waist, letting his hand linger longer than was strictly necessary. He gave a gentle squeeze before letting go. Before his conquest could wander off, he took Harry’s hand and led him outside the bar.

They paused on the sidewalk, the noise of the pub fading into a low murmur as the door swung closed behind them.

“Hey, um, Draco.” Harry scratched the back of his head. “I should probably tell you now. I don’t usually do this. Casual sex isn’t really my thing.”

“Me either,” Draco instantly replied.

This was a lie. He had casual sex all the time. It was much easier than non-casual sex in his opinion, but Harry didn’t need to know that.

“Oh, um… good. That’s good.”

Draco squeezed his hand. “Shall we go for a stroll?”

Harry stared at their joined hands, his brow furrowed like he didn’t know quite how his hand had got there. Draco tried not to be amused.

“Harry?” he prompted.

Harry looked up and met his gaze.

“Oh, right. Yeah, that sounds good. I think I need to clear my head after all those beers.”

Draco laughed even though it wasn’t even that funny, throwing his head back in a way he knew accentuated his neck. With enough practice in the mirror, he knew how to emphasise his best assets.

“Well, let’s not dawdle. We don’t have all night.”

This, too, was a lie. He had as long it would take to get Harry to agree to a date. He had a bet to win.

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Part 2: The Wronski Feint

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Harry glanced nervously around the coffee shop, adjusting the collar of his shirt and trying not to fidget. Hermione had insisted even though Harry hated collars with a passion. They always felt too stifling, like he was off to his ten-hour shift at a boring desk job. He shuddered at the thought.

As it was, he had hardly made it here in one piece.

“Malfoy?!” Ron had demanded when Harry had regaled him of his Friday night adventures and all the sordid details.

They had ended up walking through the park hand and hand, not returning home until the early morning. Draco had kissed him on the front stoop, the first rays of sunrise peeking out and turning his blond hair a glowing orange. It had actually been a very lovely evening, one of the most enjoyable he had had in a long time.

“But Malfoy, really?!”

“I think it’s nice,” Hermione had chimed in around her cup of coffee. Nothing cured a grumpy Hermione like a strong cup of caffeine. She was basically half a person until Ron brewed the first pot in the mornings. By the time Harry dropped by after his morning run, she was already well into her second cup. “I always knew you liked him.”

“What?” said Harry.

“What?” said Ron.

“Well, obviously,” Hermione explained patiently. “Why else were you so obsessed with him back in school? You spent all of sixth-year following his every move.”

“Because he was up to something!” Harry tried to defend himself.

“Mmhm,” said Hermione in that maddeningly smug way she did when she knew the answer and was dying to share it.

“Well, good luck, mate.” Ron clapped him on the shoulder and sent him out the door.

Now here Harry was at the coffee shop around the corner for their first official date. He could do it, he told himself. Hermione thought he couldn’t be in a committed relationship. Well, Harry would prove her wrong.

How hard could it really be?

“Harry!” Draco called, waving from a seat by the window.

He was casually dressed, his hair delightfully rumpled. Harry hadn’t really put much thought into it, but had he always been this attractive? Had his smile always been that… soft? Harry remembered a pointier, harder version of Draco. He realised he much preferred this newer, friendlier version — the version that beamed as Harry took a seat across from him and immediately took his hand across the table.

“I hope I’m not being too presumptuous,” Draco said, giving his hand a squeeze. “But I had a really good time Friday night, and I wanted to see you again.”

“Me too,” said Harry, softening at Draco’s words.

“Excellent.” Draco grinned, and Harry thought he could get used to that smile. “Because I have the perfect first date planned for us.”

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Everything was going swimmingly. Draco practically had Harry eating out of the palm of his hand.

After their quick jaunt to the coffeeshop (Draco had chosen it specifically — not too extravagant with a calming, homey feel that probably had Harry salivating at the mouth), they settled in the park where Draco Conjured a blanket and unshrunk the picnic basket in his pocket. Meat and cheese and fruit and wine. It was a verifiable feast, and he knew that, just like any man, the quickest way to Harry’s heart was his stomach.

It was all about timing. He and Pansy had agreed on that point at least.

He needed to reel Harry in first. That was what Pansy always did. It wasn't until the fifth date that her crazy came out, and they all turned heel and ran. Well, Draco was only going to wait until three.

Three dates to make Harry his boyfriend, then three to drive him away.

It would be easy, a piece of cake.

No man in his right mind would stay through the things Draco had planned.

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It was all going fantastically, Harry thought. Draco laughed at all of his lacklustre jokes, fed him bites of food by hand, and leaned into his side when Harry put his arm around his shoulders.

He might even get a proper boyfriend out of this, and how exciting would that be?

He couldn't wait to shove it in Hermione's face.

Hah, take that Hermione! See, I CAN date someone properly!

At the end of their date, Harry took Draco's face in his hands and leaned in, their lips meeting in a short, sweet kiss. Draco looked down like he was embarrassed, and Harry found it charming. They parted before anything more happened, Draco claiming he wanted to take things slow, and Harry marvelling at how much in common they both had.

They planned to meet again the next weekend. Harry was excited to see Draco again, and wasn't that a strange thought? Ahh, but considering the strange events of Harry's life so far, was liking Draco really that unexpected? Hermione had thought he had fancied Draco since school, which was a ridiculous notion.

As if!

But the more Harry thought about it the more his resolve wavered.

Because actually, what if?

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Their second date was perfect. Draco had planned it so.

Harry had picked the activity, but Draco had picked the seats. Harry leaned across the railing as a player swooped past their box, hanging halfway off her broom. Puddlemere United was winning, but barely. Draco couldn't have asked for a better game if he'd tried (and he'd definitely tried, but, unfortunately, the Puddlemere coach was resistant to bribes).

He rang the bell on the wall, and the stadium witch popped in with a boxful of treats and then popped away.

“Having a good time?” He wrapped an arm around Harry’s waist and snuggled him from behind, careful to leave a clear view of the pitch.

Harry turned in his arms and gave him a beaming smile. “The best. How did you get such good seats?”

Draco shrugged, playing it off like he hadn’t had to get on his knees and practically beg his family contacts to give up their prized seats for the game. “I know a guy.”

Harry took a pumpkin juice from the box, perfectly cooled. There were already two straws sticking out of the top.

“Want to share?”

“If you insist,” responded Draco. He had requested that too. He was just chock-full of good ideas, wasn’t he?

They shared the drink, their faces inches apart. When Draco let the straw fall, Harry was looking at his lips. Draco swiped his tongue out, letting it catch a drop of pumpkin juice before bringing it back inside.

Harry was enraptured. Oh, he had him now.

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Their third date was a surprise (to Harry at least).

Draco showed up at his little martial arts studio, takeaway bag in hand.

“Yoohoo,” he called, popping his head around the door frame. Harry paused the class he was leading, surprised and also pleased.

They hadn’t scheduled a third date yet. It was Harry’s fault mostly. Things always seemed to go awry after the second date — missed schedules, lost missives. Not that Harry tried that hard usually. If it was meant to be, it was meant to be, right?

And apparently, it was meant to be because Draco was here, guiding Harry into a third date without him even realising.

Harry glanced at the clock on the wall. “I have ten minutes, then I’ll be free.”

“Take your time,” Draco called jovially, heading towards the opposite end of the room where Harry’s office was tucked away. He walked like he owned the place — like he had been here a million times already. It was a little disconcerting but mostly adorable.

Harry turned back to the class, many of whom were giving Draco suspicious looks. Harry didn’t usually have visitors. Even Ron and Hermione knew to steer clear of the studio during work hours.

“Master Harry?” Velma raised her hand. “Who is that?”

“A friend.”

“You have friends?”

“Of course, he has friends,” Richard chimed in. “Everyone has friends.”

Velma turned to glare at Richard. “I wasn’t asking *you.”*

Oh boy, there they went again. He didn’t usually have any trouble with his intermediate class, but every once and a while an argument would break out, and Harry would need to reel them in with his disappointed voice and a mild threat to call the parents.

“Alright, class. Back to practising. You know the combination.”

The room soon filled with kicks and yells. He made sure to separate Velma and Richard whenever they got too close. He didn’t want to send anyone home with a broken nose. They may be only eight years old, but a punch to the nose could do damage at any age.

When the allotted time had passed, he sent the students off, waving to their parents as they got picked up at the door. Draco lounged in his office, humming to himself, seemingly unaware of his surroundings.

“You didn’t have to bring me lunch,” Harry said by way of greeting.

Draco grinned at him. “I know, but I wanted to see you. I wanted to see my boyfriend. Is that so wrong?”

Harry couldn’t help but smile. He found he didn’t mind the label at all when Draco was the one to use it. He wasn’t used to this feeling of wanting to be close to someone, of wanting to learn their likes and dislikes, of wanting to make them laugh.

He peered into the bag and groaned as the smell of lo mein wafted up at him.

“How did you know this was my favourite?”

“Lucky guess.” Draco winked.

They spent Harry’s lunch break feeding each other bits of noodle. Harry got some stuck on his chin, and Draco licked it off before licking into Harry’s mouth, his tongue tasting like sesame and soy sauce. Harry was almost late for his afternoon class because he was so distracted by Draco’s tongue.

As he watched the advanced class do high kicks, he wondered why he hadn’t tried a real relationship sooner. Or maybe it was just Draco, them seeming to fit together like the easiest thing in the world.

It almost seemed too good to be true.

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Part 3: The Hawkshead Attacking Formation

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Harry woke with a bang. He sprang up in bed, his hair still squished from sleep but his wand at the ready.

“Draco?” he asked groggily as a blurry figure with white-blond hair kicked open the door to his room. “What are you doing here?”

“Don’t mind me,” Draco said cheerily, much too cheerily for whatever arse-o’clock in the morning it was. “I’m just here to drop some things off.”

Harry rubbed at his half-closed eyes. “How did you get in? What time is it?”

“Hermione keyed me into the wards.” Draco started removing clothes from the dresser and tossing them on the ground. At least that was what it looked like he was doing. Things were still a bit blurry.

Harry rooted around for his glasses, eventually finding them hanging off the side of the bed. He checked the alarm clock on the bedside table.

“Christ, it’s three in the morning.”

“I know you’re an early riser,” said Draco, tossing another pair of sweatpants onto the growing pile of clothes in the middle of the room. “Shouldn’t you be on a run by now? I didn’t realise you were so lazy in the mornings.”

“Draco, it’s *three in the bloody morning.* I’m not that much of a health nut.”

But Draco didn’t seem to be listening as he had moved onto the bathroom, leaving a mess of Harry’s bedroom floor.

“Could this not have waited until later?” Harry called, his throat still scratchy from sleep.

“What was that?”

Harry raised his voice. “Could you not have come over later when I was actually awake?”

“What?”

“Could you — ah, never mind.” Harry sighed and resigned himself to getting out of bed at this ungodly hour.

He ambled downstairs and put the kettle on. He could hear Draco rummaging around upstairs, Salazar only knew what he was doing up there. Well, he might as well get breakfast started if he was already awake. He went to fetch the eggs and bacon and hunt down a pan.

Draco came downstairs a full hour later wearing a completely different set of robes, his hair freshly washed.

“Did you just use my bath?” Harry’s eyebrows lifted on their own accord.

“You have terrible water pressure,” Draco said, running a comb through his hair.

“Yes, I could have warned you if I had known.”

“And your soap is abysmal. It smells like Erumpent’s arse.”

Harry’s eyebrows climbed higher. “How would you know what that smells like? Have a lot of experience with that, do you?”

Draco ignored him. “Well, I’m off. I’ll be back later to drop off more things.”

“What about breakfast?” Harry gestured to the food he had made, waiting under Stasis for him and Draco to eat. He hadn’t wanted to eat without him.

Draco gave a dismissive wave. “I’m on a diet. Have to maintain my figure.”

“Oh,” said Harry, face falling. He hadn’t known.

“Toodaloo,” Draco called, and Harry heard the Floo chime as he was whisked away.

Harry sat heavily at the table, staring dejectedly at the full plates of food.

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Draco started his plan with a bang — literally.

Bright and early Monday morning (because Mondays were the worst day of the week, and he wanted to have the most impact), Draco kicked open the door to Harry’s room.

He wasted no time removing Harry’s clothes from the dresser and replacing them with his own. Seriously, how many athletic shorts did one person even need?

He Transfigured the towels in the bath to be a hideous orange, shoved all of Harry’s toiletries to the back of the cabinet to make room for his lotions at the front, and charmed the mirror to give compliments to Draco and Draco only.

Then, he took a nice long soak in Harry’s tub, refused breakfast when Harry offered, and neglected to kiss him goodbye on the way out.

He returned around mid-day when he knew Harry would be at work to replace all the furniture in the living room, reorganised the shelves in the kitchen, and hung at least twenty pictures of himself on the walls. He had made sure to get himself from *every* angle. There was even a wonderfully tasteful nude shot that Pansy had taken last summer, a well-placed Dirigible Plum covering the important bits.

Satisfied, Draco left an Anaconda-sized stuffed snake on the new plaid couch and walked right out the front door, leaving it unlocked.

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When no angry rant from Harry arrived, Draco decided to step up his game. As soon as he woke on Tuesday, he Floo-called Harry. They had planned to meet later in the week, but Draco decided to get a head start just to be sure.

“HARRY!” Draco yelled up the stairs, sticking his face out of the fireplace.

There was a clatter then a succession of thudding sounds, and Harry appeared at the top of the stairs.

“Draco?” He was squinting behind his circular glasses. Even with the thick frames, his eyesight was poor. If Draco was his *real* boyfriend, he would have insisted on replacing those horrid frames ages ago. “What are you doing here? We’re not meeting until this weekend, I thought.”

“Yes, yes,” said Draco impatiently, “but what should I *wear?”*

“What?” said Harry.

“Are we doing casual? Or should I bring my tophat?”

“You own a tophat?”

“You’re quite right,” said Draco, not paying Harry any attention. “The tophat would be much too stuffy. Perhaps the fedora.”

“You have a fedora?”

“Ta, cupcake. Thanks ever so much.” He ducked out of sight and closed the Floo connection.

“Cupcake?” Harry said, baffled, to the empty room.

By the time Harry was ready for work, Draco managed to call him five more times, once to ask about shoe preferences, and another to ask about jewellery. Yet another to ask about underwear, and one call he merely left the Floo open with Harry squinting confusedly into the empty fireplace.

When Harry was at work, Draco called his office every twenty to thirty minutes from random payphones around the city so that whenever Harry tried to call him back, a random stranger would answer instead.

“Should I get bangs?”

“Is my face too pale?”

“Oh look, there goes another robber at the grocers. Oh my, that’s a fast one.”

“Harry, did you know the Muggle Aurors ride *horses?* That seems most inconvenient.”

“Does the colour red make me look fat?”

On and on the list went. Sometimes he would catch Harry between classes; most times the office line went to voice-mail. Draco treated them both the same, rambling into the phone without pause and hanging up abruptly.

And for the icing on the cake, he dropped by the studio for lunch again. Except this time, he made sure he was over two hours late, the noodles were cold, and instead of waiting patiently in Harry’s office, he planted himself in the main viewing area and yelled insults from the sidelines.

“You call that a roundhouse kick? My mother could do better than that! Trust me, she lived with a Dark Lord.”

“Your punches are so weak, they wouldn’t knock out an unconscious person.”

A couple of students even tried to tackle him, which was the highlight of the afternoon. Harry had needed to hold them back by their collars with a shouted, “Velma! Richard! No! What did we talk about good sportsmanship?”

At the end of the lesson, Harry beckoned Draco to his office with a single crook of his fingers, jaw tight. He looked *pissed.* Oh, Draco was in for it now. He hid his satisfied smirk behind the takeaway bag.

As soon as they were sequestered in Harry’s office, Draco pounced.

“Sugarplum, are you alright? You’re looking a bit red in the face.” He put on his best simpering expression, raising his voice at least an octave until it was bordering on grating, even to his own ears.

Harry sighed, closed his eyes, opened them, and sighed again.

“Draco,” he said, but he didn’t sound angry like Draco expected, merely exhausted. “I wasn’t expecting to see you today. What a surprise.”

“Oh,” responded Draco. It took him off guard, but he quickly rallied. “Yes, well, I wanted to see you. Is that so bad?” It was the same thing he had said before, but he was hoping Harry’s reaction this time would be different.

Harry wavered, his hand reaching out and then pulling back again. He cleared his throat. “Did you bring lunch?”

How odd. No comment about Draco’s ridiculous voice messages. No complaint about his constant need for attention. He didn’t even mention Draco interrupting his class. The more Draco thought about it, the odder Harry seemed. Either he had the patience of a saint or he really was desperate for a boyfriend.

“Actually,” said Draco, Vanishing the takeaway bag with a flick. “I ate it all. Couldn’t resist. You were taking too long.”

Harry peered at him, uncomprehending. “I thought you were on a diet.”

“I am. It’s called intermittent fasting. I only eat once every 16 hours.”

“Every 16 hours? But that’s —”

“Trust me,” Draco rushed on, cutting Harry off, “it definitely works. Pansy swears by it.”

“So then…”

“Let’s spar!” Draco declared suddenly. He didn’t want to spend more time talking. Talking would just lead to Harry being *understanding* and *nice,* and that would just lead to Draco feeling *bad* and possibly *apologising.* No, that was absolutely out of the question.

“That wouldn’t be fair,” said Harry sceptically. “You’re not trained. You aren’t —”

“Who cares?” Draco said brightly, grinning with a full row of teeth. He felt a bit manic, and he was sure he looked that way too. “Let’s fight!”

Five minutes later found Draco and Harry, circling each other on the mat, hands wrapped in gauze and feet bare.

“Are you sure?” said Harry. He had removed his glasses, so his green eyes were clear and bright, piercing into Draco and forcing him to look away lest he accidentally be distracted.

“Show me what you’ve got,” Draco challenged. It would be good to fight. Maybe then Harry would realise how utterly incompatible they were. A good kick to the groin would have any man cursing and running for the hills.

“Let’s begin,” said Harry, giving a full-body bow, and Draco copied him.

So, to be honest, Draco did not know anything about martial arts. He knew how to protect his face during an ambush. He knew how to create a distraction, then turn heel and run. But staying to actually fight? — that was such a Gryffindor thing to do.

“You need to spread your feet,” Harry instructed. “It will help you keep your balance and distribute your weight. Keep your arms —”

“AAARRRGHH!!” Draco charged and rammed his forehead into Harry’s nose with a loud *crack.*

💛💛

Thursday night was game night, and all of Harry’s friends were currently setting up shop in his cramped living room.

“How is everything going?” Ron asked, concern laced in his voice. Hermione had probably put him up to it, wanting to check on Harry and his *progress.*

“Fantastic! Everything’s swell!” Harry touched his nose briefly. He had healed it with a quick *Episkey,* but the memory still stung.

“You sure, mate?” Ron glanced pointedly at one of Draco’s pictures on the wall. It wasn’t a bad picture, actually. There was just *a lot* of Draco’s skin on display. Hell, Harry hadn’t even seen that much of Draco in person. They had barely made it past first base.

“Yeah, we’re…” Harry trailed off.

“Dating?” suggested Ron. “Moving in together? Engaged and already planning your family of seven?”

“…boyfriends,” Harry finished weakly.

“That’s great to hear.” Ron paused. “Wait, is that great? You don’t sound too happy about it.”

“I don’t know,” Harry replied honestly. “It was great. It *is* great… I think. I like him, I do. He’s just… particular about some things.”

“Mate,” Ron said, clapping him on the back. “We’ve always known Malfoy was a spoiled brat. Figures some of it transferred over into adulthood.”

“Yeah.” Harry nodded. “Yeah, you’re right. Everyone has their quirks. That’s probably it. But anyway, don’t tell Hermione. We’ve barely made it past the fifth date.” (If he could even call Draco ambushing him in his sleep and at the studio dates). “I don’t want her to know we’re having problems already.”

Ron gave a mock salute. “You got it.”

Ginny waved them over. She was expertly shuffling a deck of cards with Luna’s head leaning on her shoulder.

“Alright, losers, who’s ready for some Bullshit?”

Harry groaned while Ron grinned. “You know I’m pants at this game.”

“It’s true,” Luna said in her dreamy voice. “Harry is a terrible liar.”

“Then, don’t lie,” Seamus said, smirking, and Harry stuck his tongue out at him. Dean only looked amused at their antics.

“It’s okay, Harry. I’m with you. I’m no good at this either.” Neville sat down at the table, Hannah at his side. Hannah was the newest addition to their little group. She usually didn’t say much, but Harry had found a silent camaraderie with her whenever the rest of the group became too rowdy.

“Everyone take a stack. You know the rules. You get caught lying, you take the pile *and* take a mystery shot.”

“What’s the mystery shot?” Hermione asked, settling next to Ron and sharing their cards between them.

Ginny winked. “It’s a mystery for a reason.”

Harry managed to go the first round without trouble, luck of the draw. However, by the third round, he was dancing on the table, his skin turned to purple glitter and flaking all over his assembled guests.

“Ginny, what the hell is in that shot?!”

Ginny cackled, whipping out a camera from somewhere to document Harry’s misfortunes. Thank goodness these potions were only temporary. Harry didn’t know how long he could endure being made of purple glitter.

But of course, that was exactly when the Floo sparked, and Draco came spinning through.

“Pumpkin, I’m home!” he exclaimed, rushing towards Harry and tackling him into his arms, both of them falling in a pile of purple glitter.

“Pumpkin?” Ron mouthed to Hermione, who shrugged in response.

“Did you miss me? I’ve brought you a surprise.” He pulled a carrier from his bag and set it on the table, the cards scattering to the floor.

“Oi!” Ginny yelped. “We were still playing, you git!”

“Oopsies,” said Draco, pushing the last card off the table. He hauled Harry up by the armpit, turning his back to Ginny, which was probably for the best because he missed the steam coming out of her ears as she fumed. “You look terrible by the way. And glitter is terrible for the environment.” He flicked a piece off Harry’s shoulder. “But look, look, look,” he demanded excitedly, bouncing onto his toes. It was cute, Harry could admit, and his earlier annoyance at Draco faded.

“What is it?” Harry peered into the crate.

“Open it and see.”

As Harry reached his arm in, the crate gave a startled yip and nearly fell off the table.

“Aww,” cooed Luna as Draco’s surprise was revealed. “What will you name him?”

Harry held the puppy gently as it licked at his face. He was a beautiful white with grey eyes and a black spot on his nose.

“His name is Dragon,” said Draco proudly. “Isn’t that right, my little Draconis?” He left a trail of wet kisses on the puppy’s head. He knew it was irrational, but Harry felt a sudden surge of jealousy towards the new puppy.

“Um,” said Ron. “Did you just get Harry the puppy version of yourself?”

Draco scoffed. “Of courseeeee I did. It’s so I can be with him at all times, even when I’m not actually here.”

“That’s sweet,” Harry said, looking at Draco with affection and leaning over to kiss his cheek.

Ron coughed. “Or creepy,” he muttered to Hermione, who frowned in thought.

“Now put him down,” Draco ordered Harry. “He needs to exercise. He’s been cramped up in the crate for too long, my poor darling.”

Harry dutifully set him down, and the puppy was off like the Snitch at a Quidditch match, weaving through the throng of people and disappearing somewhere into Harry’s two-story townhouse.

“Ahh, I should probably mention” — Draco whisked the carrier away and called down from the top of the stairs — “he’s not potty-trained yet.”

“Oh, hell,” said Ron.

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It took them nearly an hour to find where the puppy had run off to. In that amount of time, he had peed in no less than four places around Harry’s house. Harry was sure there was more he just hadn’t found.

Exhausted, Harry Conjured a tarp for the ground, closed the door, and let the puppy have free reign of the kitchen.

“I didn’t realise puppies were so much work,” he confessed, slumping back in the paisley armchair that Draco had brought over earlier in the week. The armrests were too thin, and the back was too angular to be remotely comfortable. Something lumpy poked into his back, and he reached behind him to remove the giant snake plushie.

Dean grimaced. “If it helps, they usually get better after the first year.”

“I certainly hope so,” Harry sighed.

“What’s up with that anyway?” asked Seamus. “Why did he get you a dog? Did you ask for one?”

“Nope,” said Harry, shaking his head. “He must have thought I wanted one.”

“Right…” said Ron.

“Should we continue the game?” Neville suggested.

“We’ll have to re-deal,” said Ginny. “The blond git messed up the last game.”

And so they did just that. They, thankfully, decided to forgo the magical shots this time in favour of regular ones. Harry didn't know how much more dancing on the table he could take.

It was actually going fairly well. Harry was down to three cards. He was going to have to lie soon, so he was hoping everyone else was too preoccupied with their own cards to notice.

"Two twos," said Harry, placing his cards on the table facedown.

"He's lying," said Draco, descending the stairs fresh from the bath in a bathrobe and slippers — Harry's bathrobe and slippers to be exact. Harry felt his mouth go dry at the same time that he realised not only had Draco thrown out most of his clothes, but the ones he hadn't tossed, he had kept for himself.

"I'm not — I'm not lying," Harry tried to say, but no one was convinced.

"Sorry, Harry, I call bullshit." Neville gave him a sheepish grin. It was always strange to hear Neville swear; he did it so rarely.

Harry flipped the cards in defeat, revealing the extent of his dishonesty.

"Hah!" crowed Ginny. "Damn, look at the size of that pile. And right at the end too."

Harry sighed, sweeping up the cards in the centre pile and adding them to his hand. There was no way he was going to win now, and he had been so *close.*

"How'd you know Harry was lying?" Hermione asked suspiciously.

"I always know when Harry is lying." Draco came to join them at the table, nearly sitting on Harry's lap and forcing him to scoot over. "Also, I could see his cards from the top of the stairs."

"That's cheating," said Ginny, but she didn't look mad about it. If anything, she looked intrigued, looking him over appraisingly.

"It's not cheating." Draco flicked his wet hair, spraying Harry in the face. "It's using all your resources to their full advantage."

"It's making your own rules," Luna said placidly, staring at Draco, and some silent understanding seemed to pass between them.

"But don't mind me. I'm just going to sit here and watch as you play."

"Right…" said Ron disbelievingly, and Harry couldn't help but agree.

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Oh, this was just perfect. From Draco's new vantage point, he could see whatever cards Harry was about to lay down and just how wrong they were.

When Harry tried to play a set of queens, Draco coughed into his sleeve.

“Bullshit?” Seamus said slowly, almost like he hadn’t meant for it to slip out.

Harry groaned and admitted defeat. “How’d you know?”

“Good intuition, I guess.” He was eyeing Draco intensely, almost with an expression of disbelief.

When Harry tried to play a set of fives, Draco plucked it out of his hand. “No, no. Don’t play that. Play *this* one.”

“Why?” said Harry.

“The picture on this one is nicer.” Which was an absolute lie. All the cards had the same style of abstract watercolours. It was just a matter of being a swirly mess of colours or an *extra* swirly mess.

Harry shrugged. “Okay, why not?”

Ginny called bullshit the next round, forcing Harry to pick up half the deck. She sent a sly grin Draco’s way. Draco got bored soon enough and draped himself across his boyfriend’s lap, demanding attention.

“Where’s Dragon?” he asked suddenly.

“Uhh, he’s locked in the kitchen,” Harry replied guiltily. “He was making a mess.”

As if on cue, the sound of barking and yipping came from the kitchen.

“And you just left him in there… *alone?”*

“Umm, yeah.”

“What if he gets lonely?”

“Mate,” said Ron seriously, “he’s a dog. He’ll be alright for an hour on his own.”

“Says you,” Draco cried in anguish. He let the tears well up in his eyes, brushing them away even though none of them had yet to fall. “My poor little Dragon, all scared and alone. Do you even care about me, Harry? Do you even care about me at all?”

“What? Of course, I do!” Harry jumped up in alarm. “Draco, where is this coming from? Of course, I care about you.”

“Then, why is Dragon locked away like some dirty little secret? Is that all I am to you, Harry, some dirty little secret?” Draco threw himself on the sofa, right across Neville and Hannah’s laps. Dean, at least, had the decency to scoot out of the way. “I should have known,” he wailed, “I mean nothing to you, nothing at all!”

“Draco, no! That’s not — I didn’t mean —” Harry’s hands fluttered over Draco, unsure where to touch, unsure how not to accidentally touch Neville and Hannah in the process.

“I’ve been disgraced! Made a fool! Bamboozled!” Draco threw a hand over his eyes. “How could you do this to me, Harry?”

“Draco, please, listen to me…” Harry pleaded, but Draco didn’t give him a chance to finish.

“Fine, fine, I see. If that’s the way it’s going to be.” He took out his wand, quite a feat as he was still horizontal on the sofa, and waved it in Harry’s direction.

“Draco, wait —” was the last thing Harry said before he was turned into a shaggy black dog with piercing green eyes and a lightning-shaped patch of white fur on its forehead.

“Did he just —” said Ron.

“He did,” confirmed Hermione.

“And that’s our cue to leave,” said Ginny, grabbing onto Luna’s arm and hurrying towards the Floo. “Good game, everyone. See you all next week!”

“Ahh, sorry,” said Dean awkwardly, “but we don’t want to get in the middle of that.” He took Seamus’s hand and pulled him through the Floo after Ginny and Luna.

“Umm…” started Neville.

“Say no more.” Ron held up a hand. “We’ll take care of it. Don’t worry.”

“Yeah, thanks,” said Neville. Then, he and Hannah were also gone.

“Right,” said Ron, rolling up his sleeves. “Now that *that’s* settled, let’s go deal with this.”

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And by dealing with this, he meant standing off to the side as Hermione Transfigured Harry back into his human form.

Draco disappeared at the first opportunity, blubbering and blowing into his embroidered handkerchief and stepping through the Floo. Pansy was waiting for him on the other side, eyeing him expectantly.

“Well?” she demanded before his feet had even touched solid ground.

“I expect a letter by morning. A Howler if we’re lucky.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Draco flipped her off on the way to her wine cabinet. They were going to need a healthy pour tonight in celebration. Hmm, maybe a nice dark cabernet. Oh, but it had been a while since they’d had the rosé.

“What did you do?” asked Pansy, raising a perfectly plucked eyebrow. Gads, Harry’s were at least twice the size and three times the bushiness. It was a miracle Draco had put up with them for as long as he had.

“Just a couple of things to scare him off. Acted like I was absolutely obsessed with him like how you were when you dated Krum.”

“I wasn’t *that* bad,” Pansy sniffed.

“Oh, Viktor, should I get the red dress or the green? What flowers should we have at our wedding? If I was a Flobberworm, would you still love me?” Draco said in a high-pitched whine. “How long did you date him anyway? Couldn’t have been more than two weeks at most.”

Pansy sent a hex at him, which he artfully dodged, not even spilling a drop of wine.

“Don’t worry, darling, Harry won’t be as slow. He doesn’t have the same level of patience as dear Vikky. In fact, he’s probably penning the letter right now.”

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~~*Dearest Draco*~~

Harry crossed out the first line angrily. He hardly thought Draco counted as dearest, not anymore at least. Not with the clothes and the furniture and the phone calls and the broken nose and the dog and and and…

~~*You could have at least taken the stupid dog with*~~

He glanced down at the puppy who was napping at his feet. It was actually pretty cute when it wasn’t terrorising his house with pee.

~~*We need to talk*~~

He scrubbed a hand over his face, removing his glasses and pinching the bridge of his nose. Breathe. Breathe. Patience. Calm. He had learned a lot of that since school, since the war. It was the thing he loved most about martial arts. Sure, the fighting was cool, and the high kicks were awesome, but the focus was the best part — being able to channel all of his energy into his body and his breath, each action deliberate and practised.

He picked up the pen and set it to the paper.

Dear Draco,

The Weasleys are having a Christmas party on Saturday and I was told to bring a date. Pick you up at 4?

-Harry

💛💛

Part 4: The Chelmondiston Charge

💛💛

Draco stalked into Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions. He threw open the curtains to the dressing room causing the lady in her undergarments to let out an undignified scream.

"Get out!" Pansy hissed, pinning the hem of a long floral train. "You can't be in here when I'm with a client."

Draco rolled his eyes.

"I mean it, Draco, or I'm banning you from the shop."

He sent Pansy a nasty look but let the curtain fall closed. The lady in her undergarments was still screaming. My, she had a pair of lungs on her. She and Moaning Myrtle could be friends.

Draco sulked in the silk chaise designated for the bored husbands while he waited for Pansy to be done. She was still an apprentice under Madam Malkin, but she basically ran the shop at this point. Soon it was going to be *Pansy's* name on the door.

"What happened?" Pansy demanded as soon as she had ushered the client out of the shop, still screaming at the top of her lungs.

Draco flopped back dramatically on the silk chaise, kicking his legs in the air. "It didn't work."

"Why not?"

"I don't *know,"* Draco replied vehemently. "I've done absolutely everything wrong. I've been so annoying even I'm starting to get annoyed. And still, he sends me *this."* He waved Harry's letter at Pansy. She read the letter and frowned.

"He doesn't even sound angry."

"I know."

"He even asked you on another date."

"I *know,"* Draco snapped. He pushed off the sofa and snatched back the letter. It was crumpled and worn. Draco had already cast a plethora of spells on it thinking Harry had sent him a hidden Howler or something.

"Well…" said Pansy slowly.

"Ughhhh!" Draco cried. "What am I supposed to do now?!"

"Oh, stop being so dramatic," Pansy chastised, kicking his shin with her pointed stiletto, and Draco flinched. There was going to be a rather large bruise there tomorrow.

She leaned closer and pursed her lips. “There’s only one thing left to do.”

Draco perked up at her ominous tone. “And what’s that?”

“Meet the family.”

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Draco arrived at the Burrow well past the point of being fashionably late and carrying the world’s worst bottle of mead. He had refused Harry’s offer of ‘hitching a ride’ and told his boyfriend he was perfectly capable of finding it on his own. He had spent the extra two hours searching through his wardrobe and standing in front of his mirror. It was a shame most of his clothes were now at Harry’s place, but he didn’t want Harry to see him before the *big reveal.*

Draco strolled up to the Burrow’s front door and knocked sharply. He stomped his Eskimo boots against the mat, making sure to get slush and half-frozen grass all over the front porch.

“Draco, you made it!” The door opened, and Draco was engulfed in a swirl of red hair. It was sweet smelling and much too long to be anything other than the Weaslette.

“Ginevra,” he greeted politely, but not too politely. He had a reputation to make tonight.

Ginny’s nose wrinkled. “Eww, don’t call me that.” And she dragged him inside, talking his ear off. He didn’t remember when or how, but she seemed to think they were the bestest of friends, or as she called them —

“Bosom buddies for life!” Ginny held up her beer.

“Oh, joy,” said Draco.

Ginny handed him a beer before he could protest, and since it would only hurt his image more, he decided to keep it. He chugged it immediately and was slurping on his third when Harry found him.

“Snookums! Sweetheart! My dearly beloved, there you are! Where have you been?” He charged at Harry, jumping up and latching his legs around that bulky frame.

Harry caught him with a surprised huff, nearly dropping him on the carpet in front of the fire. Their drinks weren’t so lucky, however, both of them tumbling to the ground.

“Well, hello to you too,” said Harry, a bit breathlessly as he was carrying Draco’s entire weight, and he sounded amused. Draco would look to be sure, but he was too busy leaving loud, squelchy kisses all over Harry’s face and neck. He had made sure to wear a nice bright lipstick just for this very moment.

Draco pulled back to look at his boyfriend, satisfied by the red lipstick marks all over him. It was a semi-permanent lipstick that would take at least a day to fade.

Now it was time to make a scene.

“Why aren’t you wearing it?” Draco’s voice was shrill. He barely refrained from covering his own ears.

“Wearing what?”

“The jumper!” He screeched, jumping down. “We were supposed to be matching!” He flung off his coat and showed off said jumper. It was neon pink and covered in blinking Christmas lights and had both Draco and Harry’s faces furiously snogging on the front. The dozens of miniature bells on it jingled as he pranced around in front of the fireplace.

Oh, and it was cropped. He couldn’t forget to mention that part.

The bottom hem barely covered his upper chest. In fact, when Draco did a particularly enthusiastic bounce, the fabric fluttered, and the entire room got a glimpse of Draco’s pointy nips.

Harry’s eyes widened so far they were practically bugging out of his head.

“I — uhhh —” Harry stuttered.

“It’s a good thing I brought an extra!” Draco declared, pulling an exact match from his pocket, unshrinking it, and shoving it at Harry’s chest.

“I’m — I’m not wearing that.”

“You *will,”* said Draco. He grabbed Harry’s chin, forcing their gaze to meet. Harry still looked a little dazed, wanting to look at Draco but his eyes kept flitting away in the next second. “You want to make me happy. Don’t you, Harry?”

“I mean, yeah, but…”

“Then, do as I say.” He pushed Harry towards the loo. “And wear the jumper.”

💛💛

Harry had done some pretty embarrassing things in his life. Why, just last week, he could be seen dancing on the table shedding purple glitter and making an arse of himself.

This might take the cake though.

Ron handed over a glass of heavily spiked eggnog and smirked.

“Not a word,” Harry said through his teeth.

Ron, as always, ignored his warning. “The lights are a nice touch.”

“Please stop.”

“And the bells. Are those for keeping track of you? Doesn’t want to lose you in the crowd?”

“Ron…”

“It’s gotta be the picture though. Is your tongue really that *long?”*

“Enough.”

Harry grabbed his best friend in a chokehold and refused to let go until Ron tapped desperately on his arm, his face beet red. Harry eventually let him go, and Ron staggered back spluttering. Really, he should know by now not to provoke someone who had a black belt in jiu-jitsu.

“So what are you going to do?” Ron gasped, still trying to get his breath back.

Now that was the dilemma. Draco, his infuriating boyfriend, was currently in an animated discussion with Oliver Wood across the room. A little too animated if Harry were concerned about those sorts of things. Did Draco really need to touch Oliver’s arm quite so much? Did he need to smile so brightly at what was probably a lacklustre joke?

Not that it mattered that much. Percy came to collect his boyfriend, giving Draco a nasty stink-eye as he did, and Draco merely winked.

“I don’t know.” Harry shook his head. “I don’t know how long I can keep doing this.”

“Cheer up, mate.” Ron clapped him on the shoulder. “It can’t get any worse, can it?”

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Draco sashayed around the room, sloshing his drink and giving beaming smiles.

So far he had flirted with every Weasley present (females excluded). He was desperate, but he wasn’t *straight.* Most of them had met his flirtations with thinly veiled distaste. Geez, it was like none of them knew how to have any fun.

Bill’s wife had been way too possessive. Draco had barely dodged the fireball in time.

Charlie’s girlfriend had been almost too enthusiastic. If Draco hadn’t excused himself for another drink, he probably would have ended up in Charlie and Cho’s bed later that night. Hmm, perhaps a thought for another time.

Percy had been, well, Percy. As soon as Draco had opened his mouth, Percy had launched into a discussion about the goblin rebellion of 1612.

The twins had flirted back good-naturedly until they got called away by Mother Weasley. They had been the closest Draco had had to a proper response all night.

Ron had glared at him suspiciously when Draco had approached, but he had gathered all of his non-existent Gryffindor courage and muddled through.

He had even chatted with Father Weasley, albeit briefly. There was only so much rambling about rubber ducks and eletrikity he could take.

Now, he was on his second go around, batting his eyelashes at anything with a dick between their legs and a head on their shoulders. He could feel Harry's gaze burning into him from behind as he laid his hand on Oliver Wood's arm yet again. He gave a beaming smile at what was probably another sorry attempt at a joke. Draco had stopped paying attention ages ago. He was almost relieved when Percy came to collect his boyfriend. His cheeks were starting to hurt from all the exaggerated smiling.

Ginny was in the process of herding everyone into the backyard for a game of Quidditch. Draco didn't plan on playing — he had worked way too long on his hair in the mirror for that — but when Ginny threw a broom at him with a wink, he found he couldn't put it down.

Harry flew up to him, his hair already in disarray. "Want to be on my team?"

"Not a chance!" Ginny shouted while helping Luna onto a broom. "All couples split up!"

Harry gave him a sheepish grin. "Guess not," he said and then sped off like it was nothing.

This was Draco's chance. He could throw a tantrum and make another scene. He had always been quite good at the theatrics. But instead of doing what he and Pansy had planned, he stared dumbly at Harry flying away on his broom, his hideously cropped jumper doing absolutely nothing to cover his rippling back muscles.

Draco's mouth fell open, and even the shimmering *"~Jingle my balls~"* message on the back of Harry's jumper did nothing to distract him from the glorious image of Harry Fucking Fit Potter straddling that broom.

💛💛

Harry spent less time searching for the Snitch and more time tracking Draco across the yard. His shirt was just so *short.* His trousers were just so *tight,* the curve of his arse looking absolutely delectable as he arched his back in a swoop. Even the glowing *"~Stuff my stocking~"* message on the back of his jumper couldn't deter Harry's wandering eyes.

He was so distracted he didn't notice Bill keeping pace with him.

"He's a charming one. I can see why you like him," Bill said, and Harry jerked, nearly falling off his broom.

"Ughh… yeah," said Harry, righting himself and forcing himself to look away from Draco and his broom.

"He even charmed Fleur. She lasted a whole ten minutes without bringing out the fireballs."

"Errr…"

"She usually only lasts five."

"That's, um, good, right?"

Bill cracked a grin and sped off, leaving Harry feeling even more off-balance than before. And that wasn't the end, either. By the end of the game, no less than the entire Weasley clan had flown up to him, complimenting Draco on this or that.

Charlie and Cho had invited them both back to their flat for a night of fun. Harry had politely passed but kept it in mind for possibly another time.

Percy had mentioned off-handedly that Draco had promised to lend him a super rare copy of *Magical Hieroglyphs and Logograms,* and Harry wasn't even sure those were real words.

The twins were ecstatic about Draco's matching jumpers. "Been trying to get Mum to let us decorate ours for years," said Fred. "Best part of the night," added George. "And a nifty bit of charmwork too. If you don't marry him, I will."

Even Arthur had been affected, passing over a rubber duck because "Draco was asking about it. I wanted him to have this one."

On and on the list went. People coming up to him and talking about Draco, about how charming he was, how handsome, how sweet. Were they seeing the same Draco that Harry was seeing? Had he ended up in an alternate reality somehow?

Harry looked across the yard, narrowing in on Draco's white-blond hair. He was hunched over the side of his broom, head huddled together with Molly Weasley, of all people. Molly leaned up, wrapping her arms around Draco and his floating waist. Draco stiffened then tentatively placed an arm around her shoulders, hugging her back.

What the hell was going on?

💛💛

"What the hell is going on?" demanded Harry, pulling Ron behind the shed.

"Whatchu mean?" Ron swayed on his feet.

Harry didn't know how many more drinks Ron had consumed since the last time they had talked, but it must have been significantly more than Harry.

"Why is he being all nice suddenly?"

"Who?"

"You know who."

"You-Know-Who is dead," said Ron with a loud belch.

"Not *that* You-Know-Who, the *other* you know who."

"You-Know-Who has a twin?"

Harry threw his hands in the air, giving up. He started stalking away, but Ron's voice stopped him.

"Do you ever think it was just an act?" Ron said, sounding a lot more sober than he had five seconds ago. "A way to hide his true feelings?"

"What was?" Harry half-turned, half-stepped closer.

"Dunno." Ron shrugged. "He seems like an alright bloke when you're not around."

"What are you saying?"

"Dunno." Ron hiccoughed, his body swaying dangerously sideways, and Harry barely managed to catch him before he fell.

And then, the rain started.

"HARRY!" Draco screamed, his wet hair flopping into his eyes. He raised his arm above his head as a makeshift shield, but it was no use. He couldn't see more than an inch in front of him.

There were three things Draco was truly terrified of: anything that could harm Mother, Hippogriffs, and rain.

The first one was obvious. Draco was a mama's boy, and proud of it. Anything that could hurt his mother would have to go through him first. The second one was related to events in Draco's third-year that he would rather not think about ever again. The third one was because… because rain felt like drowning. It felt like he was drowning while being on solid land. He couldn't swim and climb to safety because he was already there. His heavy clothes weighed him down, his vision blurred, and his hands numbed with cold.

"HARRY!" he screamed again, and Harry appeared, grabbing his hand and leading them inside.

The shed was dark, and Harry scrambled around for a few minutes trying to find a light. He eventually found the switch, and the shed was bathed in a weak yellow light, a single bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Draco was shivering, his teeth chattering.

"Hey." Harry's hand settled on Draco's arm, causing him to flinch. Harry pulled back immediately. "Are you alright?"

"No, I'm not fucking alright," Draco snapped. He took a deep breath and tried again. "I'm sorry. I just — I don't like rain very much. At all, really. It puts me on edge."

"Alright," said Harry, just like that, like it was nothing. Maybe to him it was.

“That’s it? No invasive questions? No ‘Grow up, Draco. What’s a little rain ever done to you?’”

“If you don’t like it, you don’t like it.” Harry sighed. He looked around the shed, pausing on an old dusty box. “C’mon. You must be cold. I’m sure there’s a towel in here somewhere.”

They searched through a couple of boxes. Not only did they find towels but also an old radio, an auto-adjustable hammock, and thirty years’ worth of moth-eaten clothes.

“Hey, what’s this button do?” said Harry as he pressed the red button.

“I don’t think you should —” Draco started to say, but it was too late. The hammock expanded, and Harry and Draco were thrown inside, Harry landing on top of him.

“Ow,” huffed Draco.

“Uhhh, sorry.” Harry shifted, and Draco grunted as Harry’s elbow poked him in the ribs. “Sorry, sorry.” Harry shifted some more, and something else hard poked Draco’s thigh.

Draco put a hand on Harry’s waist, his *bare* waist, and held him still. “Just stop moving.”

“Alright,” said Harry, and he finally settled down, slotting his thigh between Draco’s legs and letting their chests rest together.

Draco let his hand card through Harry’s hair, wet and tangled. It was a soothing motion, grounding him in reality and distracting him from the rain outside.

“When I was little,” Draco said because he couldn’t stand the silence, and he did like hearing the sound of his own voice. It was better than the rain, at least. “I used to beg Mother for a sibling. A sister or a brother, I didn’t care. I thought if there was someone else, the Manor wouldn’t feel as empty. I was alone for most of my childhood. All I really wanted was a friend.”

“Oh,” said Harry, a soft, contemplative sound. He tilted his chin up. Draco could tell he was looking, but he was too afraid to look down and meet that green gaze.

“But your parents didn’t want more kids?”

“No.” Draco’s arms tightened briefly around Harry before going lax. “Mother nearly died having me, and they only needed one heir. But the Weasleys… they don’t care about those kinds of things. And it’s nice, I suppose, having so much family around, family who love and support you no matter what. Family who forgive you when you make a mistake.”

Harry gave a curious hum and tilted his face back down. He was silent for several minutes before Draco could feel him visibly tensing.

“I had a cousin growing up. I guess you could say people thought we were siblings, but we weren’t, not really. Not in any way that mattered.”

Draco stroked a hand through Harry’s hair. “Do you miss them?”

Harry sighed, sending an array of goosebumps across Draco's chest. "No, he was a bastard and a bully. But sometimes I do wonder what happened to him, what kind of person he turned out to be."

"He sounds like someone I know. Someone so self-centred he didn't realise his view of the world was wrong."

"He was worse."

"I don't know if that's possible," Draco argued.

"Oh, it's possible," Harry assured him.

Draco's hand paused in Harry's hair. "You never know. People can change."

Harry tilted his chin up, and this time Draco looked down to meet his gaze. They were so full of acceptance, of kindness. Draco didn't know if he deserved to be looked at that way.

"And," Harry said, looking up at him with his kind, understanding eyes. "Have you changed?"

Draco didn't respond, simply looked into Harry's eyes. He knew he should be worried about the rain. He knew he should be thinking about the bet. But everything in his brain stalled as Harry's face drew closer.

"Because I think you have," he said, and then he was pressing his lips to Draco's.

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Harry was floating. He was swimming. He was flying.

His lips met Draco's, and it was like their first kiss all over again. They had kissed many times over their progression of dates, some better than others.

Harry parted his lips, and their tongues met in the middle. Draco tasted like cheap beer and sweat and something minty. It should have been an absurd combination, but Harry found he liked it. He opened his mouth wider and pushed closer until their bodies were pressed flush on the hammock.

He already had one thigh between Draco's legs, so he pressed it higher and rocked down. Draco moaned against his lips. The sound was intoxicating. Harry could get drunk on that sound.

Harry's hands found Draco's stomach of their own accord, sliding over the smooth skin, up and up over those pointy ribs, and playing with the hem of that stupid jumper.

"Can I…?" said Harry.

"Yes," said Draco, raising his arms above his head.

Harry slid the jumper off and leaned down to kiss Draco's newly bared chest. "Those jumpers really are terrible," he said and licked at one of Draco's perky pink nipples. "It's been teasing me all evening. I kept trying to get a glimpse of what was underneath."

Draco huffed a laugh and arched into Harry's mouth. His hands clutched at the fabric of the hammock. Harry grabbed them and guided them to his own shirt, pulling it over his head.

"I thought they would be a laugh," Draco gasped as Harry took the nipple between his teeth and bit gently.

"People were definitely laughing, but at whose expense?"

Draco sighed as Harry let go, leaving a wet trail of kisses until he reached the other side. He didn't know how far Draco would let him take things tonight, but this was already more than what he thought was possible.

"Harry," Draco said breathlessly, "I want to see you, all of you."

Later, *much* much later, when they were both sticky and sweaty and sated, Harry wiped them off with a towel and tossed it to the side just as the old radio crackled to life.

"Hey, uhh, mate," Ron's staticky voice came through. "Figured you were probably stranded in the shed. Everyone else made it back to the house alright. Rain's stopped by the way. Mum put clean clothes out for you on the porch. For Draco too. But, umm, no rush or anything. Just… yeah. See you soon. Uhhh, bye."

"Should we go back to the house?" Even as he said it, Draco held Harry tighter, his arm refusing to uncurl around him.

"Nah." Harry snuggled in closer, his head resting in the hollow of Draco's neck. "Let's stay here for a little longer."

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Part 5: The Quaffle Shot

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They were back at the pub where it all started.

Harry was nursing a beer while Draco was throwing back whiskeys. Their friends were chaotic and loud, and neither of them would have it any other way. Harry was holding his hand under the table, periodically squeezing it or giving Draco a nudge with his foot.

Draco felt like a schoolboy again with his very first crush. Except his very first crush had been Pansy, and look how that had turned out. Pansy, who was looping around the tables in what counted more as lingerie than clothing, badgering anyone in the vicinity to be her New Year's kiss. Theo trailed her like a lost puppy, and Blaise trailed Theo like a starved wolf. So, apparently, Draco's friends hadn't worked out *that* little bit of drama yet.

Ron, Hermione, and the usual crowd of Gryffindors were also nearby. Draco thought he would mind more, the seamless blending of his and Harry's two worlds, but he actually loved it. He didn't believe in soulmates, but if he did have one, he was pretty sure it would be Harry. Harry, who had weathered all that Draco had thrown at him, exaggerated or otherwise, and still looked at Draco with a smile.

Harry squeezed his hand and stood, leaning over the table for Draco's empty glass. "Need another one?"

"Maybe one more. Why? Are you buying me a drink?" He winked, and Harry blushed. It was amazing that Draco could still have this effect on him, even after they had seen each other naked.

Although, Harry was having a difficult time keeping his eyes above shoulder height. When Draco had walked into the pub with Pansy on his arm, in a yellow silk shirt that billowed around his frame and was cut so low his belly button was nearly visible, Harry's eyes had found him immediately and then refused to look away.

Draco leaned over quickly to peck his boyfriend on the cheek, and Harry walked towards the bar in a daze, bumping into a few tables as he went.

Hermione slid into Harry's empty seat almost immediately.

"I don't think I've ever seen Harry that happy. I'm glad he has you."

Draco fidgeted. Talking about his true feelings always made him uncomfortable. Why else would he and Pansy snark at each other so much? "I'm glad to have him too," he muttered.

"I was so worried Harry was only doing this because he had something to prove, but you guys are so clearly in love."

Draco froze.

"You know how competitive he can be, even when there's no competition," Hermione continued, not noticing Draco's discomfort. "I'm always telling him life isn't a competition, but it's not like he ever listens to me. What would I know anyway? Being his best friend for almost twenty years —"

"What did he have to prove?" Draco interrupted. There was an uneasy feeling in his gut.

"Ah, well, you know…" she trailed off a bit guiltily. "Harry's not great with dating. Especially anything serious. I was worried he might only have been dating you to prove that he could."

"I see." His whole body went cold. So it had all been an act, then. It was all so Draco would stay and not leave. Every kiss, every smile, was any of it real?

"Oh, but don't worry. That's obviously not the case. I mean look at him. He practically swoons every time he looks at you. See, he's even doing it now."

Draco didn't look up as Harry returned to their table and set down their drinks.

"Hey, Hermione, it's almost midnight. I think I saw Ron over by the loo," Harry said, draping an arm around Draco's shoulders which he shrugged off.

"He's at the loo *again?"* Hermione left, muttering about idiot boyfriends and mouldy sandwiches.

Someone with a megaphone climbed onto the bartop and started to countdown. Harry leaned in closer, and it took all of Draco's self-control not to flinch back.

TEN!

"Draco, are you alright? You seem upset."

NINE!

"Were you only dating me to prove some idiotic point to Hermione?"

EIGHT!

"Draco, wait, where did you hear that?"

SEVEN!

"From Hermione. She just told me."

SIX!

"Harry, did you?"

FIVE!

"Tell me you didn't. Please."

FOUR!

"Answer me, goddammit."

THREE!

The crowd rushed around them, boxing them in, but Draco hardly noticed. He was staring at Harry, at his guilty face that confirmed all of Draco's worst fears.

TWO!

"Harry…"

ONE!

"Yes. I dated you to prove a point, but, Draco, I —"

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The crowd surged, couples kissed, and poppers popped. Streamers fell from the ceiling.

Draco slapped Harry hard across the face.

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Harry stumbled into the alley, the noise of the pub fading into a low murmur as the door swung closed behind him. Draco had fled as soon as the clock had struck midnight, the crowd parting before him. Harry had fallen behind, pushing his way through the mass of people and getting accosted by his celebrating friends.

He looked to the left, then to the right. There was no sign of Draco, but they were both too tipsy to Disapparate. The park was to the right, but the nearest Floo network was to the left. It was risky, but when had his gut led him wrong?

Harry turned right towards the park, the very same park he and Draco had strolled through until the early morning, still one of the best memories of their relationship so far.

He walked on and on until he came to an empty clearing. Or, well, he had thought it was empty until he caught a flash of colour strewn across the muddy ground.

“DRACO!” he called, but the figure made no response. There was no one else it could be, however. Harry would recognize that yellow silk shirt anywhere. Hell, he had been staring at it for more than half the night and imagining what it would feel like as he peeled it off later.

“Draco,” he said again, jogging up to him.

Draco was sprawled on the frozen ground, eyes glassy, staring up at the sky. He blinked as Harry approached, but didn’t look over. He must have been cold, lying down like that in his thin shirt and trousers.

“What are you doing?” Harry tilted his head.

“Drowning on solid ground,” replied Draco flatly.

“Err, can I join you?”

Draco sighed and sat up, not a hair out of place. He still hadn’t looked at Harry. “Just go away. I want to be left alone.”

“I’m sorry,” Harry rushed out. He fell to his knees at Draco’s side. “Look, it was stupid. *I* was stupid. But I’ve completely forgotten about Hermione.”

“You forgot?” Draco said sceptically.

“Well, not forgot, but I don’t care anymore. It’s true. I started dating you because I wanted to prove that I could be in a proper relationship. Hermione is great, a really awesome friend, but she worries too much about me.” Harry grimaced and ran a hand through his hair. “And I

know it isn't an excuse, but I wanted to get her off my back for a while, but then I actually got to know you, and I —" He sighed. Might as well get it all out in the open. There was nothing worse that could happen. "I might have fallen a little bit in love with you."

Draco stared at him, his face perfectly blank, like he was too stunned to think. Harry realised he had never actually seen this expression on Draco's face. His face was always doing something — pouting or sneering or smiling, but always *something*. He wondered how many of those expressions had been real and how many had been Draco protecting himself.

Slowly, he reached out and took Draco's hand, grateful when Draco didn't immediately pull it away.

Draco exhaled a sharp breath, a white puff of air leaving his lips. Harry wanted to kiss them. They would be cold, he was sure, but he wanted to kiss every inch of Draco and warm him up.

"Harry, I should probably tell you that I…" Harry gave his hand a squeeze, encouraging him to continue. "I was also dating you to prove a point."

Harry's mouth fell open, and his hand went slack. Draco clutched him tighter.

"It isn't what you think! I made a bet with Pansy. We do shit like this all the time."

"What was the bet?" Harry whispered.

Draco looked down. "I bet Pansy that I could get you to break up with me within 10 dates."

A montage of their dates flashed through Harry's head. The first few had been perfect. Draco had been sweet and accommodating, almost overwhelmingly so. Then, there was the string of disasters, when Harry wanted to tear out his own hair from all of Draco's antics.

"So, when you showed up at my house at three in the morning?"

"I was just trying to annoy you," Draco confirmed.

"And the Floo calls and all the phone calls?" He had needed to disconnect his office phone with how many times Draco had called him.

"Yep."

"And the puppy, and the broken nose, and the ugly sweaters?"

"I thought the puppy would be enough, honestly."

Harry couldn't help it. He threw back his head and laughed, his shoulders shaking with the force of it. "This is hilarious," he said, wiping tears from his eyes. God, of course, this would happen to them. Of course, both he and Draco would be in some weird competition without even knowing it.

Draco smiled at him, hopeful and amused.

“Come here,” said Harry, dragging Draco down so they could lie on the hard ground and look up at the stars. He wrapped an arm around Draco’s waist and pulled him closer. It wasn’t that cold with the heat of Draco’s body pressed into his side.

“Can I kiss you now?” He caressed Draco’s cheek with his thumb, warming it and causing a lovely red blush.

Draco smiled with a full row of perfectly straight teeth. His smile was blinding. “I thought you’d never ask.”

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Epilogue: Happily Ever After

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“Dragon! Come out, come out, wherever you are!” Teddy tore through the house, calling for the lost puppy.

At the kitchen table, Andromeda sipped a cup of tea that Draco had prepared. Harry would’ve done it, but he was pants at making tea. Honestly, how hard could it be? If Harry wasn’t such a good lay, Draco would have long dumped him by now.

Probably.

Okay, probably not.

It had been six months, and Draco was just as in love as he had been when Harry had chased after him at New Year’s, taking him home and showing him just how much he loved Draco in return.

“Thanks for looking after him,” said Draco as little Dragon sprinted past, Teddy close on his heels.

“Don’t thank me,” responded Andromeda. “He’s ours now. You’re not getting him back.”

Draco laughed. “Teddy seems quite taken with him.”

Harry barged in, his rectangular wire-frame glasses askew. “Anyone seen Teddy?”

Draco smiled up at his boyfriend. “You just missed him. Ran through with the puppy a moment ago.”

“Thanks, love,” said Harry and kissed Draco briefly on the forehead before he was off.

Andromeda smirked at him. “You seem quite taken as well.”

Draco didn’t even try to deny it, just smiled into his own cup of tea.

An owl swooped through the open window, dropping a copy of *Witch Weekly* on the table. A note in Pansy's elegant script was attached to the front.

Happy birthday, darling! Enjoy your present. -From your better half 💋

Draco flipped over the magazine and stared at the front cover. *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Dates (or Less)! Draco Malfoy spills it all with exclusive details about the one and only Harry Potter!* He flipped to the article, his heart beating faster and faster, his face getting redder and redder. It was all there in lurid, sordid detail. All of his ridiculous schemes, all of his private conversations with Pansy. There was even an entire page dedicated to discussing the length and girth of Harry's package (above average, in case anyone was wondering).

Draco slammed the magazine down on the table.

"That bitch!"

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! You can show your appreciation for the creator by leaving a comment below. ♥

This work is part of an on-going anonymous fest hosted on Tumblr at hd-erised. The creator will be revealed January 5th.

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